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*To the Knights, Gentlemen, Freeholders
and Commons of England,*

*EDWARD STEPHENS wisheth
Prudence, Piety, Peace and Happiness.*

Gentlemen and Fellow-Commoners,

WHat you see here *Open* was sent *Sealed* to divers Members, your Trustees and Representatives in Parliament, being then printed, not to be publish'd, but only a small number to be presented to them. But since they have publish'd their * *Votes* concerning it; 'tis fit and but just you should see what it is they have so Censur'd. I have many years endeavoured to serve you to the best of my Ability, without seeking Preferment or Reward from Men, or accepting of what hath been offer'd. What I have written lately for the Service of our Great Master and your Selves, hath been ill requited by the Prudential * *Latitudinarian* Bishops with False Reports and Calumnies, no less than of *Madness* and *Popery*, like the *False Prophets* of old, and the *Incendiaries* of the late Civil Wars: And what I have offer'd to the House for the same purpose, both formerly, and now again, hath been so treated as is very inconsistent either with their Duty or our Right. For these things I appeal to the Righteous Judgment of Almighty God, to your own Consciences, and to the next Parliament; and to a Convention of the Clergy, as to what concerns the Bishops and the false Charge of Popery. These Gentlemen, who set up themselves for our *Masters*, receive all their Authority from Us, and under our Hands and Seals; and if we do not let them know they are our *our Servants*, and accountable to Us for their Behaviour, We our selves are justly answerable for their Misbehaviour before God and Man. And if we do not appear as well for the Honour of the King, when there is occasion, as for the Rights of the Subject, we do not discharge our Duty to our Country, perform our Oath to the King, or are Worthy of the Benefit of so Noble a Government. I hope you will look better to your Election the next time, and send up such Persons as have more sense of Religion

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* A name not
imposed, but as-
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perly.

ligion and their Duty to God, of the true *English* Government, and the Honour of the King, of your Rights and the Trust reposed in them, and fit to enquire into the Miscarriages of these.

To Sir Richard Cocks.

Sir Richard,

AS I am a Commoner of *England*, it is, as I told you before, my Right and my Duty to take notice, and complain to the *House of Commons*, of all, or any such matters of publick Concern as are proper for the Inquiry or Consideration of that House. And as I am a Christian, I am much more obliged to use that Right, and discharge that Duty, when they are such as do affront, or do Contempt to the Christian Religion, which is the Religion of the Nation, and so Essential a part of this Constitution, that it is one of the Fundamental Principles of our Laws, that what-ever Laws are enacted in any thing contrary to this Religion, they are so far void and null. This is the common Right and Duty of every Commoner of *England*. But besides all this, I have been for some Years, by the special Providence of Almighty God, engaged in his more immediate Service, and without limitation to any special Charge; so that where-ever I have opportunity for his Service, I am obliged faithfully to discharge it. And besides all this, I am obliged by Oath to be faithful to the present King, which I intend, by the Grace of God, faithfully to perform, tho' for special, and, I think, good Reasons, I refuse to take it again. These are great Obligations, and such as I cannot discharge without taking notice and complaining of what I observe greatly amiss in *Both Houses of Parliament*. And I shall do it first to you, as my proper Representative; and by you desire it may be represented to the House, as you will answer it to your Country, for which you serve.

In your House I observe such abominable Impiety, and Contempt of Religion, as greater hath rarely been known: I have heard it complained of by Members of the House, that a Man can hardly mention any thing of God or Religion there, but he shall be in danger to be ridicul'd or laught at. And when I have asked, why no body moved the House that some of them might be called to the Bar, and made Examples, the common Answer hath been, *It would be to no purpose*. Which is the Shame of the whole House, and notorious Evidence of their Impudence and Ignorance of what becomes such Assemblies, in one part of them; and of such Baseness,

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ness, as makes them unworthy of the Name of Christians in the rest; as if the generous Discharge of so great and noble a Duty, was not of it self a thing to great purpose; as if the Fearful, or such as are ashamed of Christ, or his Words, are not to have their part with Infidels and Unbelievers; *that is*, with such as the rest of their Fellow-Members of whom they complain; as if their Baseness might not reasonably be imputed by the others to Infidelity and Disbelief of the Religion, which they profess, to the Scandal of Religion, and Hardening those poor Creatures in their Impiety. It is no wonder if the whole Nation abound in Infidelity, and all kind of Wickedness, when there is no more Religion in those who should correct it among the Commons, and the * *Latitudinarian* Bishops among the Lords. And now I appeal to the Consciences of all, who have any Sense of Religion, and to the dreadful Tribunal of Almighty God, whether these things be not true, and whether there be not more danger to the Nation from such a *House of Commons*, and such *Bishops*, than from *Popery*, and from all the *Priests* and *Jesuites* in the Nation, if they were as many more as they are.

And where there is no more Fear of God, it is no wonder if there be not that Honour and Respect for the King; that there ought to be: Freedom of Debates in Parliament is undoubtedly the Right of the Subject: But if under pretence of Freedom of Debates any Members shall do acts of Insolence and Disrespect to the King, that is no part of their Right, but a Violation of Duty to the King, and tending to the Dissolution of the Government, and ought to be corrected.

That your late *Votes*, grounded upon a false and foolish Letter to a Member of Parliament, was such, is believed by many, to get an advantage against the King; and to prevent that, 'tis likely many did comply in their Votes, who did not see any other reason for it; and the Choice of the Chairman for that Committee, a Person, who was turn'd out of her Service by the late good Queen, hath declared openly in your Lobby to my self, that he thought Vice ought to be encouraged, and is reported to have expressed no little disrespect to the King in your House before now, is a considerable Aggravation of the Indignity. How such things can be consistent either with Conscience and Religion, Civil Duty to our Country, and one of the best Governments in the World, or their Oaths of Fidelity to the King, I do not understand: Nor so much as with common Prudence for themselves, and their own Rights. The King hath shewed himself a Prince of great Courage, and of as great Prudence and Conduct. Almighty God has by him, as his Instrument, in Confederacy with divers of the chief Catholick Princes, vouchsafed us a happy Peace, if we have the Discretion to use it as we ought, and as becomes Persons sensible of his Goodness, and

Of their Prudentials, I have long since noted one remarkable Instance in Reflections on the Action at Sea, p. 29, 30, 31: and another lately in my Narrative, besides others elsewhere.

and of the Respect they ought to have for his Instruments in it. But I doubt these Politicians do but egregiously befool themselves with a vain Conceit add Presumption of having the Purse of the Nation. For certainly the King hath as little need of them, as they have of him: And by such Politicks they do but provoke the just Indignation, not only of a wise Prince, but of all honest and faithful Subjects; and most of all, of those Confederates, who, if this King should die, as he must one day, may by the just Judgment of God, enter into a Confederacy of themselves to correct their Ingratitude and Folly. Nay, should the King but dissolve this Parliament, and in a Declaration set out such Reasons as he may for that, and for Calling of another, their little Politicks with themselves might probably be soon in the dirt. The *Pretence of the* * *Growth of Popery* hath been made use of to so ill purpose heretofore; hath so little ground at this time, more than what proceeds from the Negligence of the Clergy in assisting condemned Persons, and visiting the Sick, and the Obstinacy and Unconcernedness of a Party of Prudential *Latitudinarian* Bishops, for what does more properly belong to their Charge, and particularly for mending their Cause, and making that sound, which is indefensible at present; and is raised, I believe, so unseasonably to serve and support a lame and tottering Cause, that 'tis like to prove the Shame and Confusion both of it, and of those who make use of such indirect Means for that purpose. Let me but know who were the Composers of that Letter, and had the Impudence and Folly to call me (as it is commonly understood) *Madman Convert*, (two Lyes at once) and I do not doubt but to give you such Account of the whole Matter, as will sufficiently satisfy both the House and all honest and wise Men in the Nation. What I have more to say, I shall reserve till I see what Use is made of this. I hope the House will consider what is to be done, both to *expiate* that provoking Wickedness against God, and to *Correct*, as they deserve, all Indignities done to the King: and you shall always find me ready, in what belongs to me, to serve Both, and my Country, in the best manner I can.

* There are other more proper, natural, and effectual Means to remove all Fear of Popery, than such Violence of Factions: of which the King cannot but know something.

Your humble Servant,

Edward Stephens.